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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Research)

SUBJECT : The NRO Aircraft Operations

REFERENCES : a. Memo to the DD/NRO from the D/NRO dtd 22 Apr 63,
Subj: NRO Aircraft Operations [Redacted]

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b. Memo for the Deputy Secy. of Defense from the
DNRO dtd 18 Apr 63, Subj: Operations Aspects of
the NRO [Redacted]

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1. It is apparent that Dr. McMillan is fairly intent on organizing within the immediate NRO staff an Aircraft Operations Unit which will be responsible for massaging our overflight plans enroute to the DNRO for Special Group consideration. Accordingly, I feel it is somewhat academic then to attempt in any way to modify or restrain the sentiments of Dr. McMillan on this subject. I am also convinced that we will be able to live with an NRO Aircraft Operations Unit without any major adjustments on our part.

2. As a commentary on Dr. McMillan's latest memorandum I suggest that it really does nothing in the way of clarifying his original memorandum on the subject, and it certainly does not retract or rectify certain fallacious statements made in the original correspondence to the Deputy Secretary of Defense. I feel that we would do well for ourselves as well as for Dr. McMillan if we called his attention to the error of certain statements he has made to the Secretary. It is obvious from his correspondence that Dr. McMillan has been convinced that there is a certain inadequacy in the overall planning and coordination of aircraft overflight activities. This, in effect, is a low keyed inferential reprimand to CIA. It is also erroneous.

NRO review(s)
completed.

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3. Dr. McMillan suggests that with the establishment of an NRO Aircraft Operations Unit not only will he then be guided by "military personnel with appropriate operational knowledge and operational experience", but will also be blessed with the achievement of coordination with the JCS heretofore apparently unattainable. He also specifies that no such formal coordination arrangements have been established between the NRO and the JCS. If Program B is not part and parcel of the NRO then Dr. McMillan's statement is true, however, if Program B is an integrated organization of the NRO then his statement is false. I would like to refer you to a JRC memorandum which outlines the procedures by which CIA will advise the JRC of our intended overflight activities. This document also specifies that upon receipt of such information what steps will be taken by the Joint Reconnaissance Center to coordinate the activity with J-3, J-2, the Director of the Joint Staff, the Chairman of the JCS, the Secretary of Defense, and the Deputy Secretary of Defense. The document referred to is JRCOI 3000.3 dated 20 July 1961. In a covering memorandum which forwarded this document to CIA, Major General Fred Dean, Director of Operations for the USAF stated, "The cooperation and assistance provided by CIA personnel to the JRC Project Officer has been commendable and there are no areas of conflict or disagreement."

4. I think Dr. McMillan's attention should be called to the fact that for seven years now we have conducted clandestine overflights employing the highest calibre of personnel which the Air Force had to offer our joint, highest priority projects. I am not at all convinced that this experience, in modern times, can be equalled elsewhere.

5. It is difficult to foresee exactly how the NRO Air Operations will function. It could evolve that the Director of Program B would no longer function, as now, for the DNRO but actually would be employed as a leg man to formulate the plans and operations to be considered first by the NRO Aircraft Operations Unit, then secondly by the JCS, and thirdly, upon their endorsement, forwarded to the DNRO. I am not unmindful of the strong probability that the Air Force operational planning will not occasionally conflict with the more clandestine type operations conducted by CIA. I feel that this is a great area of potential conflict, but unfortunately for CIA, it will not take place in the arena of our own grounds.

6. Additionally, I would like to point out that in Dr. McMillan's original document on this subject dated 15 April 1963 [redacted] he suggested that the JRC maintain NRO liaison with USIB in regard to all requirements for intelligence, mapping and geodesy collection.

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According to the CIA/NRO agreement, you as Deputy Director of the NRO were charged as responsible for "supervising relations between the NRO and the USIB and its sub-committees and the intelligence exploitation community."

7. It is interesting to note that we have received no complaint or indication from the JRC that the JCS or unified and specified commands were at all unhappy with our operating procedures and methods of notification. I remain unconvinced that this new layer of coordination which Dr. McMillan wants to impose upon us will do any more in streamlining the efficiency of our operations but more probably will set the stage for an eventual military usurping of Program B's activities. I hold no optimism for the possibility of dissuading Dr. McMillan from organizing this unit as he has so stated. I reiterate, however, my strongest feeling that the fallacy of several of his assumptions and statements, for the sake of the record, be either retracted or modified to conform with actuality and fact.

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JACK C. LEDFORD
Colonel, USAF
Assistant Director
(Special Activities)

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